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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000559

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IT](#) [IZ](#) [IRAQI](#) [FREEDOM](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ/ITALY: GOI'S MEETINGS WITH AND MESSAGE TO
TAREQ AZIZ

REF: A. MILAN 89

[1](#)B. SECSTATE 36445

[1](#)C. ROME 495

[1](#)D. ROME 489

[1](#)E. VATICAN 483

[1](#)F. ROME 443

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR THOMAS COUNTRYMAN
FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: PM BERLUSCONI WILL NOT/NOT MEET TAREQ AZIZ DURING HIS TRIP TO ROME. WHILE NOT CONFIRMED YET, IT IS LIKELY FM FRATTINI WILL MEET AZIZ IN ROME FEB. 14. GOI OFFICIALS CONFIRMED THAT THEY WILL GIVE AZIZ A STRONG MESSAGE IN PRIVATE AND WILL REITERATE THE SAME MESSAGE PUBLICLY: THE GAME IS OVER; SADDAM MUST COOPERATE IMMEDIATELY, ACTIVELY AND FULLY IN IRAQ'S DISARMAMENT AND GO INTO EXILE, OR ELSE FACE VERY SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) ON FEB. 10, NEA WATCHER DELIVERED REF B DEMARCHE TO PAOLO DIONISI, DEPUTY DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR TO PM BERLUSCONI, LUIGI MACCOTTA, THE MFA'S OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR IRAQ, AND TO CESARE RAGAGLINI, FM FRATTINI'S CHIEF OF STAFF. DIONISI PASSED REFTTEL POINTS TO THE PM THE SAME DAY. BERLUSCONI HAD ALREADY DECIDED HE WAS NOT GOING TO MEET WITH TAREQ AZIZ, DIONISI TOLD US FEB. 11, AND OUR POINTS CONFIRMED HIS POSITION. THE PM HAS NOT DECIDED YET WHO FROM THE GOI WOULD MEET AZIZ, STRESSED DIONISI, BUT IT WAS LIKELY TO BE FM FRATTINI, ON FEB. 14 AFTER AZIZ'S AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE (REF E.)

[1](#)3. (C) NOT MEETING AT ALL WITH AZIZ WOULD HURT NOT ONLY THE ITALIAN CAUSE BUT POSSIBLY ALSO THE AMERICAN CAUSE, ARGUED DIONISI. IF AZIZ WERE TO MEET ONLY WITH THE POPE AND OPPOSITION MEMBERS WHO ARE AGAINST THE WAR, ITALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION WOULD PERCEIVE HIM AS A "SAINT" AND THOSE WHO REFUSED TO MEET HIM, THE GOI IN THIS CASE, AS "EVIL," SAID DIONISI. IT WOULD BE MORE USEFUL TO MEET WITH AZIZ, GIVE HIM IN PRIVATE AND THEN REITERATE IN PUBLIC THE MESSAGE THAT SADDAM MUST COOPERATE IMMEDIATELY, ACTIVELY, AND VOLUNTARILY IN IRAQ'S DISARMAMENT, GO PEACEFULLY INTO EXILE, OR BE DISARMED AND REMOVED FROM POWER BY FORCE.

[1](#)4. (C) WHEN ASKED ABOUT OTHER MEETINGS WITH AZIZ, DIONISI AND LUIGI MACCOTTA SAID THAT ONLY AN AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE ON FEB. 14 (REF E) AND A MEETING WITH LOMBARDY PRESIDENT FORMIGONI ON FEB. 13 (REF A) HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONFIRMED. MACCOTTA ASKED FORMIGONI TO FOLLOW THE GOI'S OFFICIAL FIRM POSITION ON IRAQ IN HIS MEETING WITH AZIZ. DIONISI MENTIONED AN UNCONFIRMED RUMOR THAT AZIZ, WHO ARRIVES IN ROME FEB. 13, MIGHT STAY IN ROME UNTIL FEB. 17-18 TO MEET UNSG ANNAN WHO ARRIVES IN ROME FEB. 17 FOR AN IFAD MEETING. (NOTE: ANNAN WILL HAVE A WORKING LUNCH WITH BERLUSCONI IN ROME FEB. 18, TO WHICH AZIZ WILL NOT/NOT BE INVITED EVEN IF HE IS STILL IN ROME, ASSURED DIONISI. END NOTE.) AZIZ MAY ALSO MEET WITH ROME MAYOR VELTRONI FEB. 15, BUT THAT WAS STILL UNCONFIRMED, SAID DIONISI.

[1](#)5. (U) PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT AZIZ WILL VISIT ASSISI FEB. 15 WHERE HE WILL PRAY, VISIT THE TOMB OF ST. FRANCIS, AND LIGHT THE TORCH OF PEACE. HE IS THEN EXPECTED TO HAVE LUNCH AT THE SACRED CONVENT WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF VARIOUS FRANCISCAN ORDERS, THE BISHOP AND THE MAYOR OF ASSISI.
SEMBLER

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